

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Iroquois County Man Pleads Guilty, Taken into Custody for Interstate Travel to Engage in Sex with a Juvenile**

Springfield, Illinois -- An Iroquois county, Illinois man was taken into custody today after he pled guilty to traveling out of state to engage in sex with a juvenile, as announced by Rodger A. Heaton, United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois. Chief U.S. District Judge Michael P. McCuskey scheduled sentencing for Michael Baker, age 22, of Watseka, Illinois, on April 19, 2007.

Baker pled guilty to traveling to Wisconsin on October 8, 2005, where he met a juvenile girl he had been communicating with via the Internet. Baker drove the girl and two of her teenaged friends back to his home in Watseka. Baker admitted that the next day, October 9, 2006, he engaged in illicit sexual conduct with the girl with whom he had been communicating, a minor under age 18. Later in the day, Baker and a friend of his drove the girls back to their home in Wisconsin.

At sentencing, the offense of traveling to engage in illicit sexual conduct carries a maximum statutory penalty of 30 years imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000.

The charge is the result of an investigation under Project Safe Childhood by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement with assistance from the Iroquois County Sheriff's Department, Iroquois County State's Attorney's Office, Waterford, Wisconsin Police Department and Racine County, Wisconsin Sheriff's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy A. Bass.

The nationwide Project Safe Childhood initiative is designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by United States Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit [www.projectsafchildhood.gov](http://www.projectsafchildhood.gov).

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